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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006740

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LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: REACTION TO AUGUST 19 ATTACK IN AQABA

REF: A. AMMAN 6694 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. TD-314/50178-05

[1](#)C. TD-314/50241-05

[1](#)D. TD-314/50103-05

[1](#)E. TD-314/50404-05

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

The Investigation

[1](#)1. (S/NF) The GOJ is conducting an intense security operation in Aqaba, and has detained some 300 people. However, the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate informs us that it has not yet reached any conclusions as to who may have been responsible for the launch of the three Katyusha rockets (ref b). Amman RMAS, RSO and DAO officers, as well as personnel from the Kearsarge group, are in Aqaba coordinating with Jordanian authorities on the investigation. At GOJ request, a team of FBI explosives experts is on its way to Jordan.

U.S. Forces

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Amman DAO, CENTCOM and the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) are working out plans to return to the Kearsarge group the roughly 770 U.S. Marines who had been conducting exercises inland at Qatranah, probably no later than August [1](#)24.

GOJ Posture

[1](#)3. (C) Palace officials told Charge that King Abdullah (currently in Russia) has instructed the GOJ to emphasize this incident as an attack by extremists on moderate Islam and on Jordanians, and to focus on the death of a Jordanian soldier and the fact that one rocket struck the wall of a hospital. The King is expected back within two or three days. His brother, Prince Feisal, is serving as regent, and he has struck a high media profile at military and religious funeral rites for the soldier who died. Post has conveyed condolences on the soldier's death to the palace and to JAF headquarters.

Public Reaction

[1](#)4. (C) Taking their cue from the government, Jordanian media have either ignored or downplayed the fact that U.S. navy vessels were the target. Coverage of the soldier's funeral, and his father's comments that he was a martyr for the King and for Jordan, saturated local media. The director general at the influential Al-dostour daily noted to PAO that informed journalists know that joint military and naval training exercises are a routine element in the US-Jordanian relationship and are therefore not noteworthy in this case.⁸ Others either don't know about the exercises or have gotten the government's message and are ignoring them. There has been significant coverage of the detention of Iraqis, Egyptians and Syrians in the Aqaba round-ups. One marginal weekly (Al-Anbat) and one editorial comment in today's mainstream press imply links between the increasing involvement of the U.S. in Jordan's political-military scene and this attack targeting Jordan, without drawing any direct explicit connections.

[1](#)5. (C) Post has received numerous calls from contacts in parliament, civil society and academia who without exception have condemned the attacks. Many stressed that the while a U.S. naval vessel may have been targeted, they considered the attacks as an act of terrorism against Jordan. Several expressed their fears that the rocket attacks would negatively affect tourism in Aqaba, as well as Jordan's hard-earned reputation for stability and security. Mohammad Al-Badri, one of two MPs from Aqaba, assured poloff that the overwhelming majority of people in Aqaba welcomed Americans and were "horrified" by the attacks. A few contacts remarked that they were "not surprised" that terrorist violence

elsewhere in the region had finally reached Jordan. The Islamic Action Front has not yet spoken out publicly on the attack.

Post security

16. (SBU) RSO placed the Marine security guard detachment on standby and the local guard force and roving patrols on alert. Post's surveillance detection unit (SDU) increased coverage around the Mission, residences and the American Language Center (ALC). In response to post's request, the GOJ has augmented its security coverage around Embassy, Embassy residential areas, the ALC, and the American Community School (ACS).
HENZEL